

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A fee estimation tool for a professional services firm for estimating the cost of a  
5 new matter, such as litigation and/or employee tribunal, the tool being operable to  
identify details of billed amounts for like, but completed matters and determine an  
estimate of the cost for the new matter using the billed amounts for the like, but  
completed matters.
- 10 2. A fee estimation tool as claimed in claim 1 that is operable to extract the details of  
billed amounts from a database or file that includes details of billed amounts for a  
plurality of different matters.
3. A fee estimation tool as claimed in claim 1 wherein the details of the billed  
15 amounts include any of the number of professional hours billed; the grade of fee earners  
involved; the time taken to complete the matter; the time spread of the charges; re-  
chargeable disbursements, and costs for other services, including photocopying.
4. A fee estimation tool as claimed in claim 1 that is operable to determine the  
20 estimated amount for a new matter based on an average over a plurality of completed  
matters.

5. A fee estimation tool as claimed in claim 1 that is operable to determine the estimated amount based on an average over a plurality of completed matters and corrected to take into account changes in hourly billing rates.

5 6. A fee estimation tool as claimed in claim 1 that is operable to use time spread information to provide an indication of what percentage of costs are incurred at what stage of a matter.

7. A fee estimation tool as claimed in claim 6 that is operable to present the time  
10 spread information graphically.

8. A fee estimation tool as claimed in claim 6 that is operable, in the event that the new matter becomes live, to provide an indication of the time spread of live billing data for the new matter as percentage of the estimated total and the estimated duration of the  
15 matter.

9. A management tool for a professional services firm, the tool being operable to identify details of fees for professional hours billed and the grade or category of fee earners involved for a plurality of like, but completed matters, and use this information to  
20 determine what percentage of the total fee from the hours billed is provided by each grade or category of fee earner involved.

10. A tool as claimed in claim 9 is operable to receive a user input of an estimated fee and use this and the percentage cost provided by each grade of fee earner to calculate the amount of the estimated fee that can be allocated to each fee earner grade, and the corresponding number of fee earner hours for each fee earner grade.

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11. A tool as claimed in claim 9 that is operable to receive a user input of an estimated fee and allow the composition of the fee earner team to be varied, and use the new team data to calculate the numbers of hours each team member would have to do to keep within the estimated fee or a specified margin.

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12. A management tool for a professional services firm, the tool being operable to identify details of billed amounts for like, but completed matters, including an average cost and duration, and use this information to provide an indication of what costs are incurred at what stage of a matter.

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13. A tool as claimed in claim 12 wherein the costs are expressed as a portion or percentage of the total cost, and the average duration is divided into predetermined time slots and expressed as a a portion/percentage of the total average duration.

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14. A tool as claimed in claim 12 that is operable to present the cost/time spread data graphically.

15. A tool as claimed in claim 12 that is operable to use billing data for a live matter, together with an estimate of the total fee and an estimated date of completion for that live matter to provide an indication of the portion of the total fee used to date.
- 5 16. A tool as claimed in claim 12 that is operable to use billing data for a live matter, together with an estimate of the total fee and an estimated date of completion for that live matter to provide an indication of the portion of the total fee used to date and to present cost/time spread information for the live matter graphically.
- 10 17. A management tool for a professional services firm that is operable to use historical billing information for a plurality of like, but completed to calculate the number of professional hours and grade of fee earner for a new, but similar matter in order to meet an estimated fee using the historical billing information and provide an indication of the cost as a function of time for both the historical matters and the new matter.
- 15 18. A management tool for a professional services firm that is operable to use historical billing information for a plurality of like, but completed matters to determine an estimate for a new matter; calculate the number of professional hours and grade of fee earner for that new matter in order to meet an estimated fee using the historical billing
- 20 information and provide an indication of the cost as a function of time for both the historical matters and the new matter.

19. A management tool for a professional services firm that is operable to use historical billing information for a plurality of like, but completed matters to determine estimates for a new matter; calculate the number of professional hours and grade of fee earner needed for that new matter in order to adhere to a specified profit margin and
- 5 provide an indication of the cost as a function of time for both the historical matters and the new matter.
20. A method for providing management information for a professional services firm involving using historical billing information for a plurality of like, but completed
- 10 matters to determine estimates for a new matter; calculating the number of professional hours and grade of fee earner needed for that new matter in order to meet an estimated cost and providing an indication of the cost as a function of time for both the historical matters and the new matter.
- 15 21. A method for providing management information for a professional services firm involving using historical billing information for a plurality of like, but completed matters to determine estimates for a new matter; calculating the number of professional hours and grade of fee earner needed for that new matter in order to adhere to a specified profit margin and providing an indication of the cost as a function of time for both the
- 20 historical matters and the new matter.